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Not So Dark Horse

Sen. Dodd Big Possibility As Johnson's Running Mate

Roscoe Drummond is on vacation. During his absence, his column will be written by members of the staff of the New York Herald Tribune.

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Continents apart, some big-name Johnson administration personalities are talking enigmatically of a Vice-Presidential candidate who hasn't really been mentioned before.

He's the white-thatched, dark-suited Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, from Connecticut. Mentioning his name in Asia and in Europe, with calculated casualness, dropped lots of listeners' jaws. Sen. Dodd, just finishing his freshman full term, seems to grate on the professional liberals' nerves and fancies.

Yet the fact that several political fill-in sessions were devoted to the Dodd possibility deserves substantive review. His candidacy obviously hasn't been thrown into a grab bag with other names simply to keep the opposition inside and outside his party guessing.

A hard-nosed, pragmatic man on foreign affairs, Dodd's anti-Communist credentials are utterly unquestioned. He has, even against appeals from the late Kennedy administration, stuck to warnings against flaccid support for the Nkrumahs, the Castros and uncertain characters in the Congo. In every case, most recently with the restoration of Moise Tshombe, he has been proved unerringly accurate.

His anti-communism has, to his critics, obscured some of his more realistic accomplishments at home and abroad. He is, in the spectrum of political semantics, a moderate. His experience in foreign relations, as an FBI agent and on domestic legislation, gives him a couple of light years' start on Republican William E. Miller.

Like Miller, Sen. Dodd is also a Roman Catholic from the Northeast. Moreover, he supported Lyndon Johnson in 1960 and delivered a seconding speech in the President's behalf at the Democratic convention. Dodd carried his support for Johnson to the floor of the convention despite every ounce of advance persuasion the Kennedy organization tried to exercise on him.

The other day he was in the White House on some business with the President. From half an hour's scheduled time, Dodd stayed on two hours. When they emerged, President Johnson had his arm thrown around the bantam Senator's shoulders and beamed broadly and happily. They are friends, rather good friends at that.

This fact of life has long been recognized by the Attorney General and his younger brother, the junior Senator from Massachusetts. The Kennedy family has said, guardedly it must be admitted, that a Dodd boom for Vice-President isn't inimical to the party interests.

On the home front, for example, Dodd helped create the first civil rights' section within the Department of Justice. He prosecuted in the South some of the original transgressors years ago. Years later, when the John Birch Society made ugly noises and hurled calumnies at public

figures, Dodd rose and condemned it.

The professional liberal has recoiled from the name of Dodd in the past because he doesn't care about the Senator's role in the Senate's internal security subcommittee. His unyielding anti-communism, however, has its realistic side, too.

It was Dodd's resolution in May, 1963, that broke the logjam in the Senate and resulted in the limited nuclear test-ban treaty with the Soviet Union. But, look, cry his critics, at how difficult he is about the UN. Lots of well-placed men in government are, too, but they don't say so openly.

Because of his persistent attacks on Communist policy and vast popularity in his own state and outside with minority groups that have ethnic ties in Eastern Europe, Dodd's name is well known.

The cynics would probably say that tapping Dodd for the Democratic candidacy for Vice-President is crass politics. Whatever they might criticize, Johnson would have a candidate whom Miller couldn't dent without hurting himself badly. Dodd's experience and activity are on the record. You can't say the same for Miller's.

How about the liberals among the Democrats?

"They'd have no place else to go, face it," was one wise and succinct assessment of a Dodd candidacy. "Let's not forget that these same liberals overlooked Sen. Sparkman when he ran with Adlai Stevenson in 1962."

Dodd, a rather eloquent phrase-maker who looks like most people's image of a Senator, doesn't talk about the possibilities. On elections, all he talks about is trying to win bigger in a Senate race than last time. Then, he won the greatest plurality ever for a Connecticut Senator, over 140,000 more than his Republican opponent.

In sum, Dodd has all the advantages for a Democratic national ticket and he brings no debits with him. Age? He is 57, in good shape, and besides, Lyndon Johnson—should he win—wants a second full term for good measure. Dodd won't be a drag on the ticket or detract from the President's ambitions for the future. Therefore, it's not idle speculation that his name has

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